Using the TPS6215x in an Inverting Buck-Boost Topology

Tahar Allag, Chris Glaser   *Low Power DC-DC Applications*

ABSTRACT

The TPS6215x family of synchronous buck dc-to-dc converters from Texas Instruments features a wide operating input voltage range from 3 V to 17 V and an adjustable output voltage of 0.9 V to 6 V. These devices are well-suited for many applications, such as standard 12-V rail supplies, embedded systems, and portable applications. Furthermore, the TPS6215x can be configured in an inverting buck-boost topology, where the output voltage is inverted or negative with respect to ground. This application report describes the inverting buck-boost topology in detail for the TPS6215x family. This topology can also be applied to the TPS6213x/4x/6x/7x converters.

Contents

List of Figures

---

1   Inverting Buck-Boost Topology

1.1   *Concept*

The inverting buck-boost topology is very similar to the buck topology. In a standard buck configuration, shown in Figure 1, the positive connection (V_{OUT}) is connected to the inductor and the return connection is connected to the device ground.

Figure 1. Buck Topology

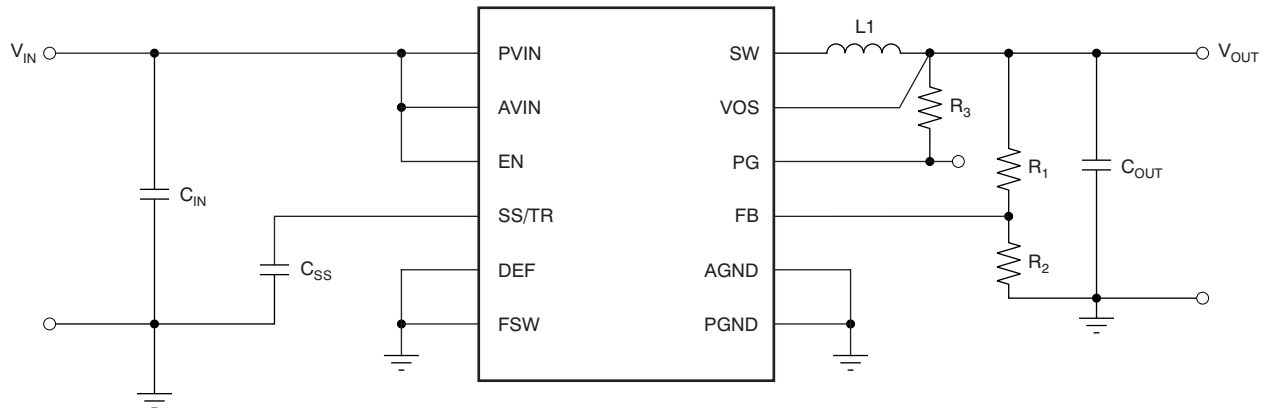However, in the inverting buck-boost configuration illustrated in Figure 2, the device ground is used as the negative output voltage pin (labeled as V_{OUT}). What was previously the positive output in the buck configuration is now used as the ground (GND). This shift in topology allows the output voltage to be inverted and always remain lower than the ground.
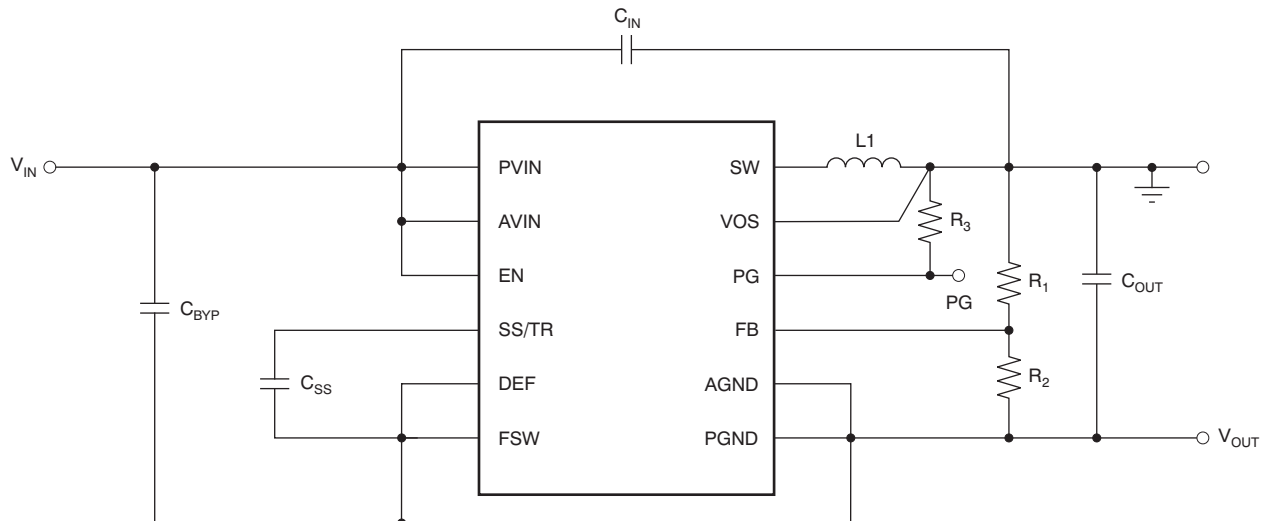
Figure 2. Inverting Buck-Boost Topology

The circuit operation in the inverting buck-boost topology differs from that in the buck topology. Though the components are connected the same as with a buck converter, the output voltage terminals are reversed, as Figure 3(a) shows. During the *on* time of the control MOSFET, shown in Figure 3(b), the inductor is charged with current, while the output capacitor supplies the load current. The inductor does not provide current to the load during that time. During the *off* time of the control MOSFET and the *on* time of the synchronous MOSFET, shown in Figure 3(c), the inductor provides current to the load and the output capacitor. These changes affect many parameters, as discussed in the *Design Considerations* section.
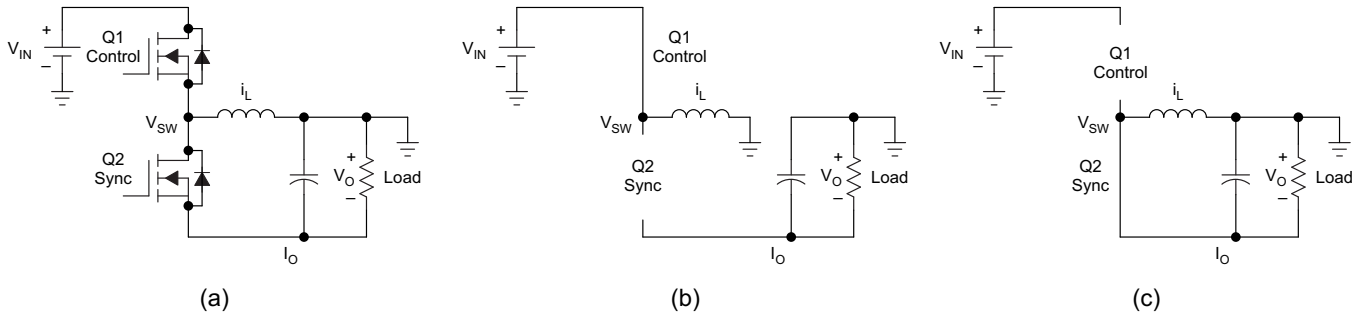

(a)																											(b)																											(c)

Figure 3. Buck-Boost Configuration

1.2 Output Current Calculations

The average inductor current is also affected in this topology. In the buck configuration, the average inductor current is equal to the average output current because the inductor always supplies current to the load during both the *on* and *off* times of the control MOSFET. However, in the inverting buck-boost configuration, the load is supplied with current only from the output capacitor and is completely disconnected from the inductor during the *on* time of the control MOSFET. During the *off* time, the inductor connects to both the output capacitor and the load (see Figure 3). Knowing that the *off* time is (1 − D) of the switching period, Equation 1 can be used to calculate the average inductor current:

$$I_{L(Avg)} = \frac{I_{OUT}}{(1 - D)}$$

(1)

The operating duty cycle for an inverting buck-boost converter can be found with Equation 2:

$$D = \frac{V_{OUT}}{V_{OUT} - V_{IN}} \times \frac{1}{\eta}$$

(2)

rather than V_{OUT}/V_{IN} for a buck converter. The efficiency term in Equation 2 adjusts the equations in this section for power conversion losses and yields a more accurate maximum output current result. The peak-to-peak inductor ripple current is given by Equation 3:

$$\Delta I_L = \frac{V_{IN}D}{f_S L}$$

(3)

where:

- ΔI_L (A): the peak-to-peak inductor ripple current
- D: duty cycle
- η: efficiency
- f_S (MHz): switching frequency
- L (µH): inductor value
- V_{IN} (V): the input voltage with respect to ground, not with respect to the device ground or V_{OUT}

Equation 4 calculates the maximum inductor current:

$$I_L = I_{L(avg)} + \frac{\Delta I_L}{2}$$

<div align="right">(4)</div>

For example, for an output voltage of –3.3 V, 2.2-μH inductor, and input voltage of 12 V, the following calculations produce the maximum allowable output current that can be ensured based on the TPS62150 minimum current limit value of 1.4 A. The efficiency term is estimated at 85%.

$$D = \frac{V_{OUT}}{V_{OUT} - V_{IN}} \times \frac{1}{\eta} = \frac{-3.3}{-3.3 - 12} \times \frac{1}{0.85} = 0.254$$

<div align="right">(5)</div>

$$\Delta I_L = \frac{V_{IN} \times D}{f_s \times L} = \frac{12 \times (0.254)}{2.5MHz \times 2.2\mu H} = 554mA$$

<div align="right">(6)</div>

Rearranging Equation 4 and setting $I_{L(max)}$ equal to the minimum value of I_{LIMF}, as specified in the datasheet, gives:

$$I_{L(avg)} = I_{L(max)} - \frac{\Delta I_L}{2} = 1.4 - \frac{0.554}{2} = 1123mA$$

<div align="right">(7)</div>

This result is then used in Equation 1 to calculate the maximum achievable output current:

$$I_{OUT} = I_{L(avg)} \times (1 - D) = 1123mA \times (1 - 0.254) = 838mA$$

<div align="right">(8)</div>

Table 1 provides several examples of the calculated maximum output currents for different output voltages (–1.8 V, –3.3 V and –5 V) based on an inductor value and switching frequency of 2.2 μH and 2.5 MHz, respectively. Increasing the inductance and/or input voltage allows higher output currents in the inverting buck-boost configuration, while using the low frequency setting decreases the available output current. The maximum output currents for the TPS62150 in the inverting buck-boost topology are frequently lower than 1000 mA due to the fact that the average inductor current is higher than that of a typical buck. The output current for the same three output voltages and different input voltages is displayed in Figure 4.

Table 1. Maximum Output Current Calculation for Different Values of V_{IN} and V_{OUT}

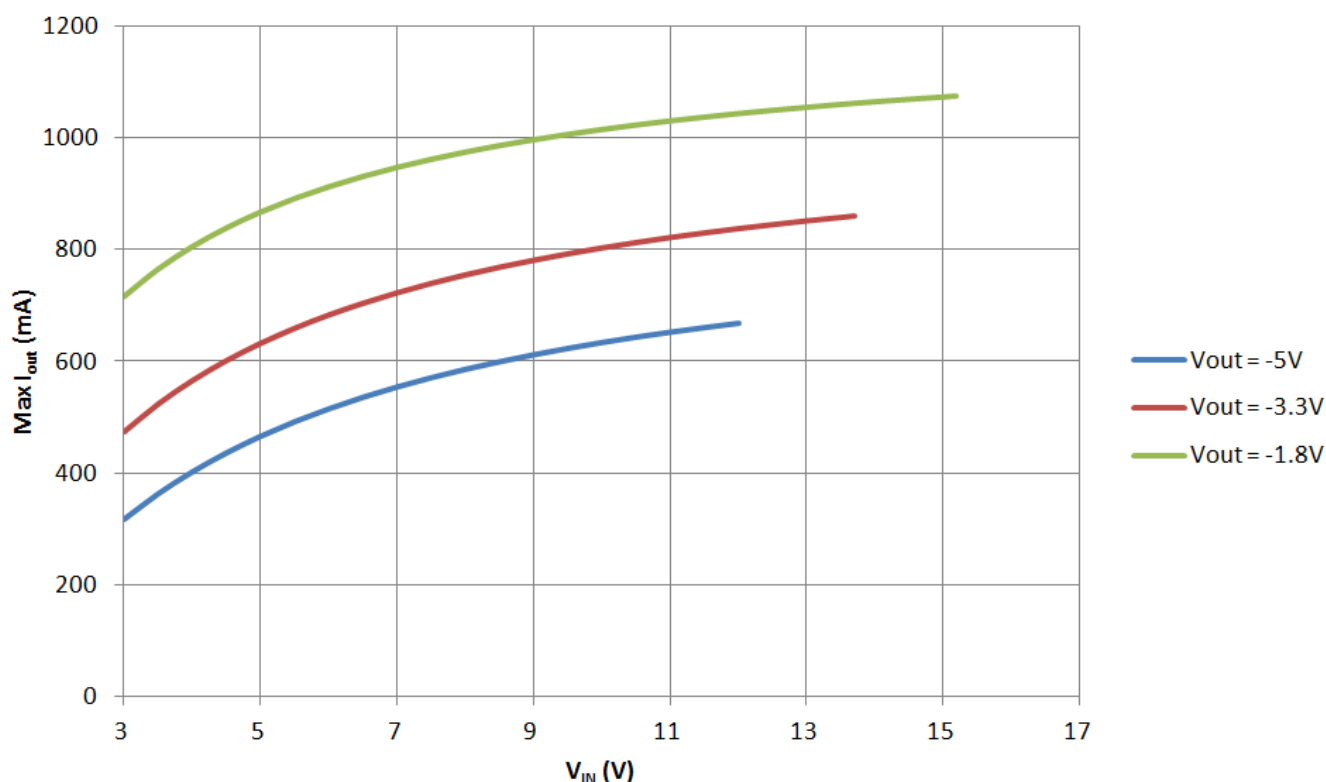| f_s (MHz)	2.5	2.5	2.5
V_{OUT} (V)	–5	–3.3	–1.8
L (μH)	2.2	2.2	2.2
V_{IN} (V)	12	12	12
$I_{L(max)}$ (A)	1.4	1.4	1.4
η	0.85	0.85	0.85
D	0.346	0.254	0.153
ΔI_L (mA)	755	554	335
$I_{L(avg)}$ (mA)	1023	1123	1233
I_{OUT} (mA)	669	838	1043

Figure 4. Maximum Output Current versus V_IN

1.3 V_IN and V_OUT Range

The input voltage that can be applied to an inverting buck-boost converter IC is less than the input voltage that can be applied to the same buck converter IC. This is because the ground pin of the IC is connected to the (negative) output voltage. Therefore, the input voltage across the device is V_{IN} to V_{OUT}, not V_{IN} to ground. Thus, the input voltage range of the TPS6215x is 3V to 17 + V_{OUT}, where V_{OUT} is a negative value.

The output voltage range is the same as when configured as a buck converter, but negative. The output voltage for the inverting buck-boost topology should be set between –0.9 V and –6 V. It is set the same way as in the buck configuration, with two resistors connected to the FB pin.

## 2 Design Considerations

2.1 Additional Input Capacitor

An additional input capacitor, C_{BYP}, is required for stability as a bypass capacitor for the device. This capacitor is in addition to the input capacitor, C_{IN}, from V_{IN} to ground (refer to Figure 2). The recommended minimum value for the bypass capacitor and the input capacitor is 10 µF.

As a side effect, the C_{BYP} capacitor provides an AC path from V_{IN} to V_{OUT}. When V_{IN} is applied to the circuit, this dV/dt across a capacitor from V_{IN} to V_{OUT} creates a current that must return to ground (the return of the input supply) to complete its loop. This current might flow through the internal low-side MOSFET's body diode and the inductor to return to ground. Flowing through the body diode pulls the SW pin and VOS pin more than 0.3 V below IC ground, violating their absolute maximum rating. Such a condition might damage the device and is not recommended. Therefore, a Schottky diode should be installed on the output, per Figure 5. Startup testing should be conducted to ensure that the VOS pin is not driven more than 0.3 V below IC ground when V_{IN} is applied.

Figure 5. TPS62150 Inverting Buck-boost Schematic with Schottky D1

The AC path through C_{BYP} might also worsen the line transient response. If strong line transients are expected, the output capacitance should be increased to keep the output voltage within acceptable levels during the line transient.

2.2 Digital Pin Configurations

2.2.1 Digital Input Pins (EN, FSW, DEF)

Because V_{OUT} is the IC ground in this configuration, the EN pin must be referenced to V_{OUT} instead of the ground. In a buck configuration, the specified typical threshold voltage for the enable pin in the product data sheet is 0.9V to be considered high and 0.3V to be considered low (see the TPS62130, TPS62140, TPS62150, TPS62160, and TPS62170 product data sheets, Reference 2 through Reference 6). In the inverting buck-boost configuration, however, the V_{OUT} voltage is the reference; therefore, the high threshold is 0.9V + V_{OUT} and the low threshold is 0.3V + V_{OUT}. For example, if V_{OUT} = -3.3V, the V_{EN} is considered a high level for voltages above –2.4V and a low level for voltages below –3V. The same effect is true with the DEF and FSW pins.

This behavior can cause difficulties enabling or disabling the part, since in some applications, the IC providing the EN signal may not be able to produce negative voltages. The level shifter shown in Figure 6 alleviates any problems associated with the offset EN threshold voltages by eliminating the need for negative EN signals.
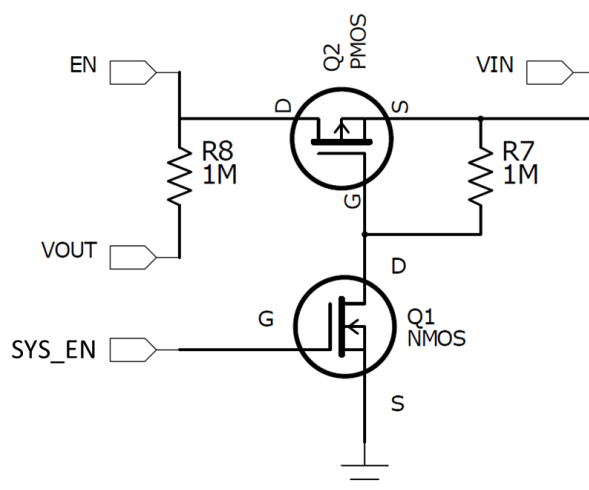
NOTE: VOUT is the negative output voltage of the inverting buck-boost converter

Figure 6. EN Pin Level Shifter

The positive signal that originally drove EN is instead tied to the gate of Q1 (SYS_EN). When Q1 is off (SYS_EN grounded), Q2 sees 0V across its V_{GS}, and also remains off. In this state, the EN pin sees V_{OUT} which is below the low level threshold and disables the device.

When SYS_EN provides enough positive voltage to turn Q1 on (minimum V_{GS} as specified in the MOSFET's data sheet), the gate of Q2 is pulled low through Q1. This drives the V_{GS} of Q2 negative and turns Q2 on. As a consequence, V_{IN} ties to EN through Q2 and the pin is above the high level threshold, causing the device to turn on. Ensure that the V_{GD} of Q2 remains within the MOSFET's ratings during both enabled and disabled states. Failing to adhere to this constraint can result in damaged MOSFETs.

The enable and disable sequence is illustrated in Figure 7 and Figure 8. The SYS_EN signal activates the enable circuit, and the G/D NODE signal represents the shared node between Q1 and Q2. The EN signal is the output of the circuit and goes from VIN to –VOUT properly enabling and disabling the device. An active discharge circuit was implemented to accelerate –V_{OUT}'s return to 0V when the IC is disabled.
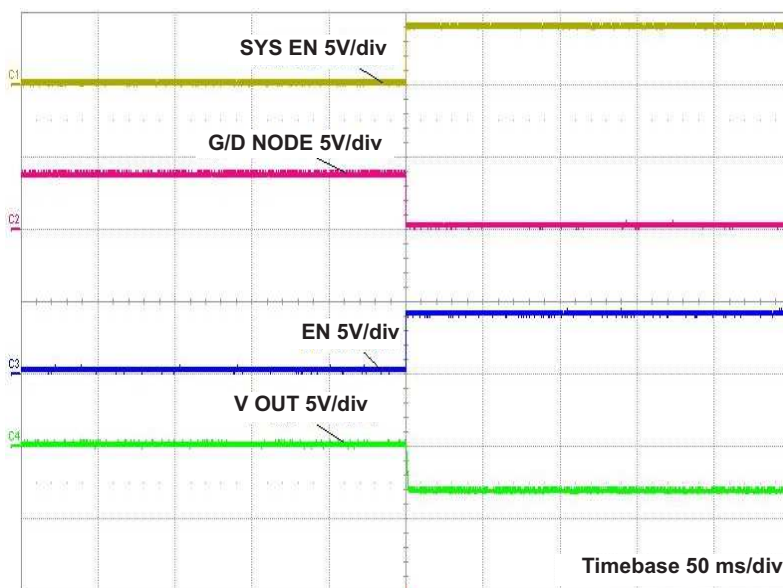

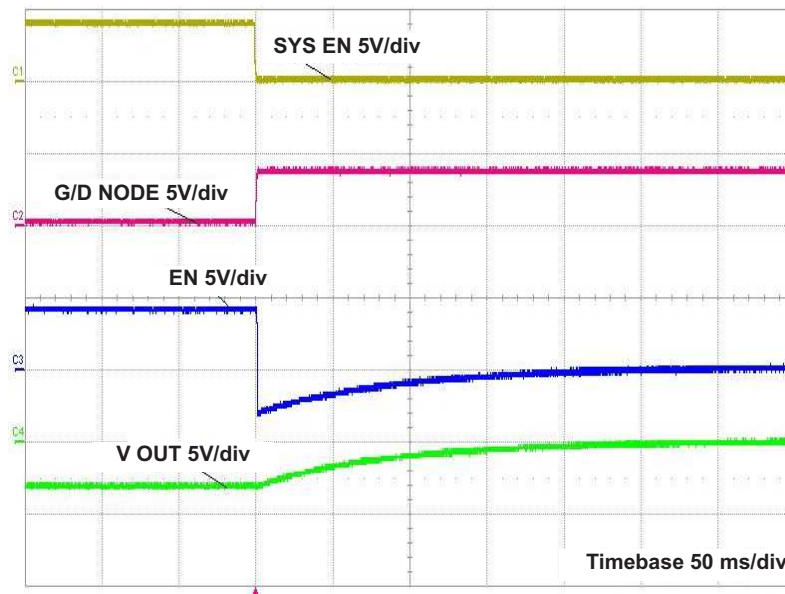**Figure 7. EN Pin Level Shifter on Startup**

Figure 8. EN Pin Level Shifter on Shutdown

2.2.2 Power Good Pin

These devices have a built-in power good (PG) function to indicate whether the output voltage has reached its appropriate level or not. The PG pin is an open-drain output that requires a pullup resistor. Because V_{OUT} is the IC ground in this configuration, the PG pin is referenced to V_{OUT} instead of ground, which means that the device pulls PG to V_{OUT} when it is low.

This behavior can cause difficulties in reading the state of the PG pin, because in some applications the IC detecting the polarity of the PG pin may not be able to withstand negative voltages. The level shifter circuit shown in Figure 9 alleviates any difficulties associated with the offset PG pin voltages by eliminating the negative output signals of the PG pin. If the PG pin functionality is not needed, it may be left floating or connected to V_{OUT} without this circuit. Note that to avoid violating its absolute maximum rating, the PG pin should not be driven more than 7 V above the negative output voltage (IC ground).
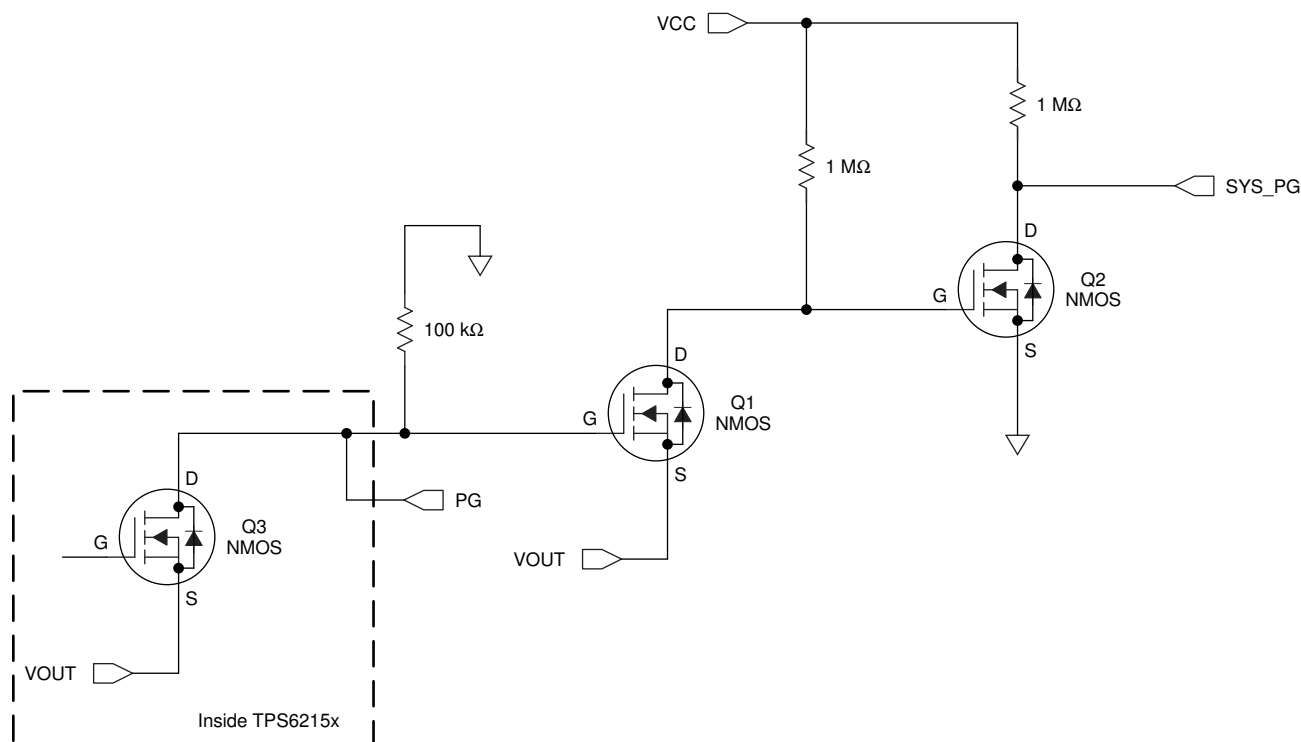
Figure 9. PG Pin Level Shifter

Inside these devices, the PG pin is connected to an N-channel MOSFET (Q3). By tying the PG pin to the gate of Q1, when the PG pin is pulled low, Q1 is off and Q2 is on because its V_{GS} sees V_{CC}. SYS_PG is then pulled to ground.

When Q3 turns off, the gate of Q1 is pulled to ground potential turning it on. This pulls the gate of Q2 below ground, turning it off. SYS_PG is then pulled up to the V_{CC} voltage. Note that the V_{CC} voltage must be at an appropriate logic level for the circuitry connected to the SYS_PG net.

This PG pin level shifter sequence is illustrated in Figure 10 and Figure 11. The PG signal activates the PG pin level shifter circuit, and the GD Node signal represents the shared node between Q1 and Q2. This circuit was tested with a V_{CC} of 1.8 V and dual NFET Si1902DL. The SYS_PG net is the output of the circuit and goes between ground and 1.8 V, and is easily read by a separate device.
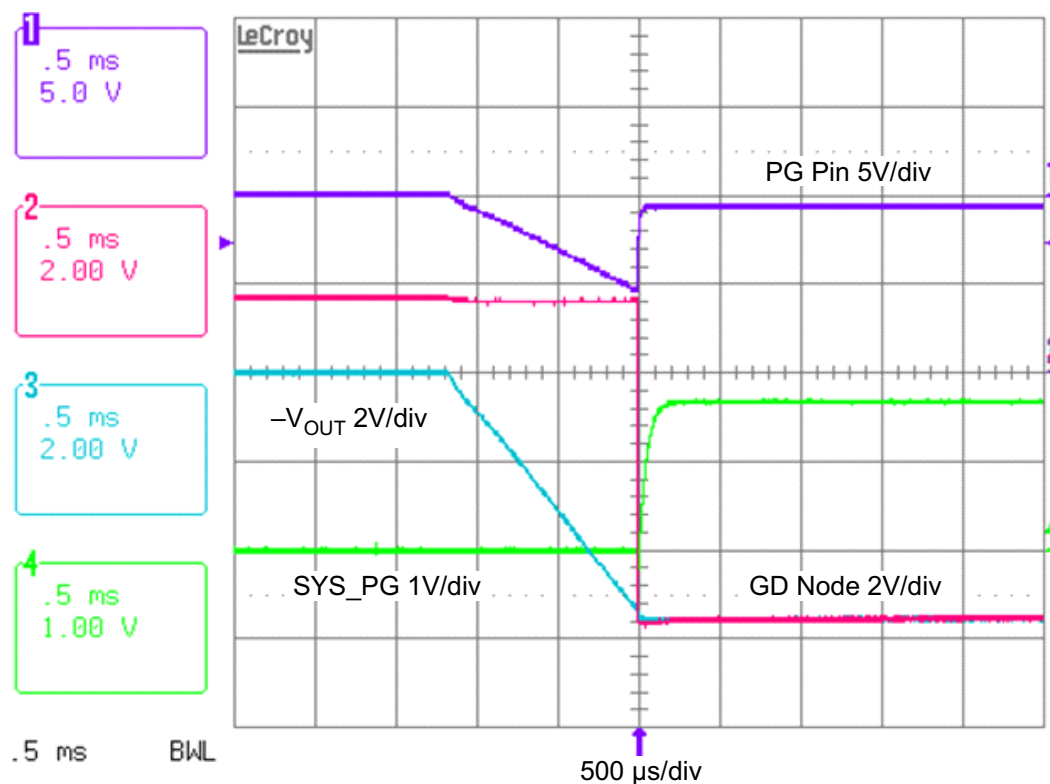
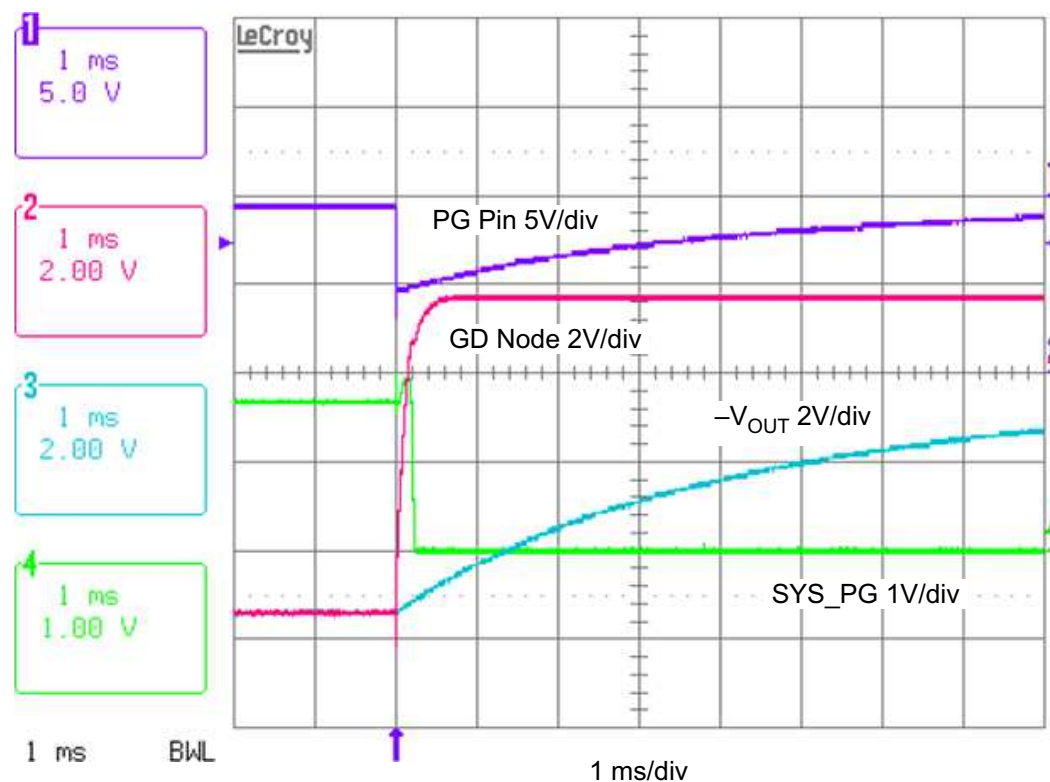**Figure 10. PG Pin Level Shifter on Startup**

Figure 11. PG Pin Level Shifter on Shutdown

2.3 Startup Behavior and Switching Node Consideration

In the inverting buck-boost topology, the voltage on the SW pin switches from V_{IN} to V_{OUT}, instead of from V_{IN} to GND. As the high-side MOSFET turns on, the SW node sees the input voltage; as the low-side MOSFET turns on, the SW node sees the device ground, which is the output voltage. During startup, V_{IN} rises to achieve the desired input voltage. V_{OUT} starts ramping down after the EN pin voltage exceeds its threshold level and V_{IN} exceeds its UVLO threshold. As V_{OUT} continues to ramp down, the SW node low level follows it down. Figure 12 shows the resulting normal and smooth startup of the output voltage.
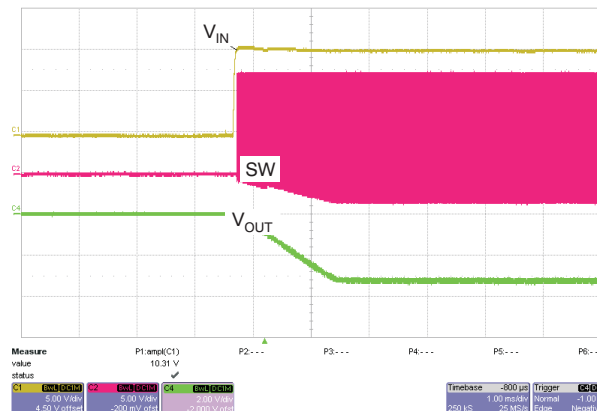

Figure 12. SW Node Voltage During Startup

3 External Component Selection

The inductor and output capacitor must both be selected based on the needs of the application and the stability criteria of the device, which are different from the traditional buck converter approach. A load transient test should be performed to evaluate stability. Figure 21 shows the results of such a test performed on the example circuit. The lack of ringing indicates stability.

3.1 Inductor Selection

To select the inductor value for the inverting buck-boost topology, use Equation 1 through Equation 4 instead of the equations provided in the TPS62150 data sheet. These formulas help to select the proper inductance by designing for a maximum inductor current ($I_{L(Max)}$) or finding the peak inductor current for a given inductance. $I_{L(Max)}$ should be kept below the device minimum current limit value for a reliable design. The worst-case $I_{L(Max)}$ occurs at the minimum V_{IN} for a given design.

Once $I_{L(Max)}$ is determined, it is recommended to choose an inductor with a saturation rating 20% to 30% higher than $I_{L(Max)}$ to allow for peak currents that may occur during startup or load transients. For the inverting buck-boost topology, the minimum recommended inductance is 2.2 μH. If more efficient, half-frequency operation is desired (FSW = high), then a 3.3-μH inductor is the recommended minimum value. The FSW pin should be connected to ground to set it to a logic high.

3.2 Capacitor Selection

Tiny ceramic capacitors with low equivalent series resistance (ESR) are desired to have low output voltage ripple. X5R- or X7R-type dielectrics are recommended for the stable capacitance versus temperature characteristics. A minimum 10-μF capacitor is recommended for both C_{BYP} and C_{IN}. These capacitance values can be increased without limit. For the output capacitor, a minimum of 22 μF is recommended. Making this capacitor value too great can cause instability. This situation can be evaluated through a Bode plot or load transient response. The voltage rating of C_{BYP} must be greater than (V_{IN} + V_{OUT}).

4   Typical Performance

The reference design shown in Figure 13 was used to generate the typical characteristic graphs presented in this section and illustrated in Figure 14 through Figure 22.
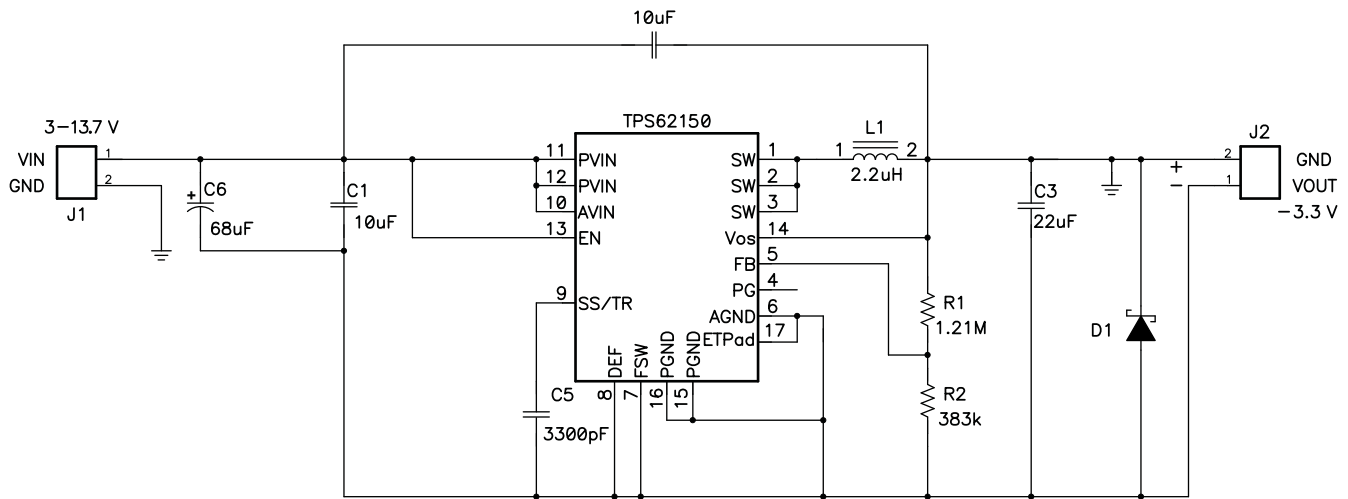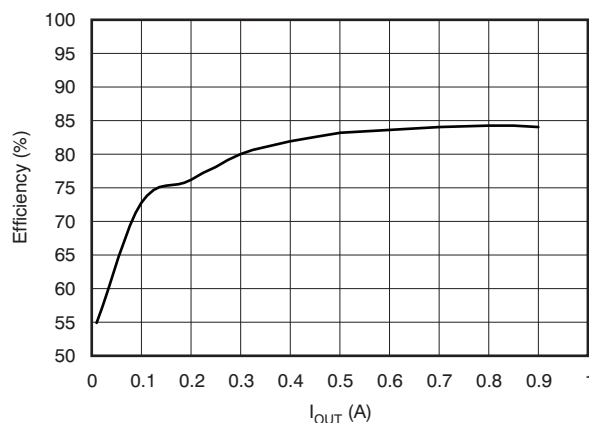

Figure 13. Schematic of the Tested Circuit

Figure 14. Efficiency vs Load Current with V_{IN} = 12 V
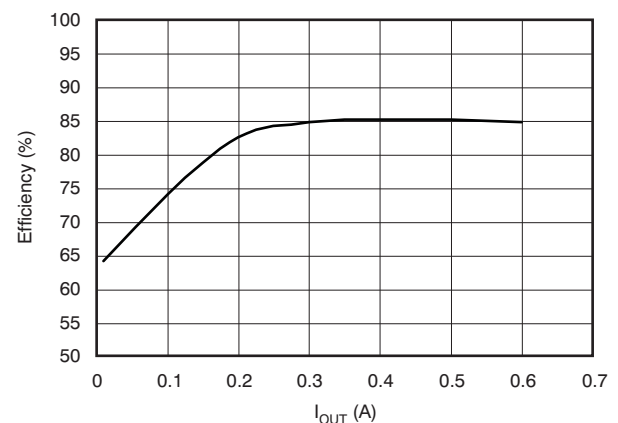

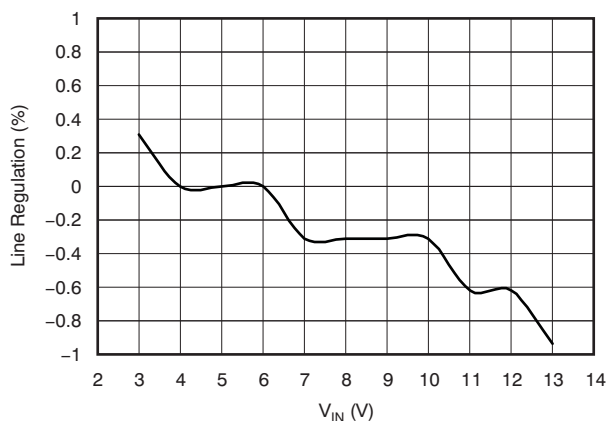**Figure 15. Efficiency vs Load Current with V_{IN} = 5 V**
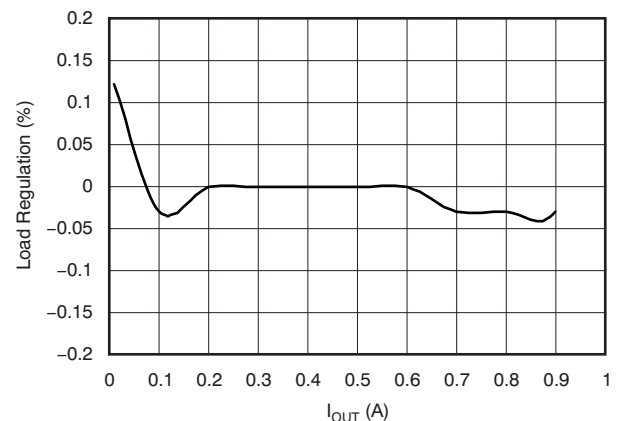

Figure 16. Line Regulation at 500-mA Load
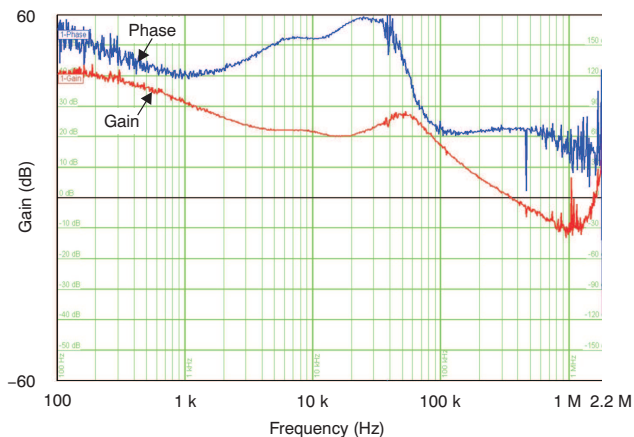

Figure 17. Load Regulation at V_{IN} = 12 V

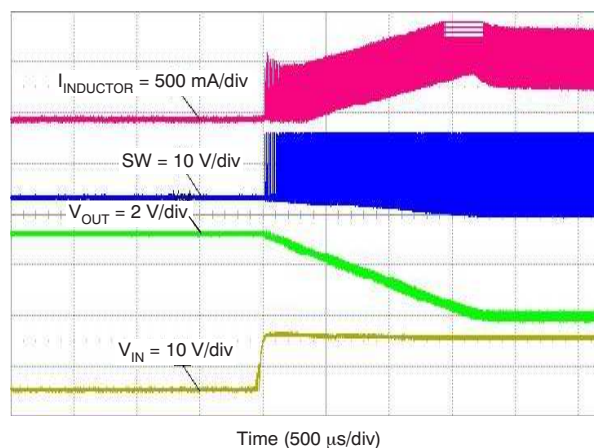**Figure 18. Bode Plot at V$_{IN}$ = 12 V and 500-mA Load**

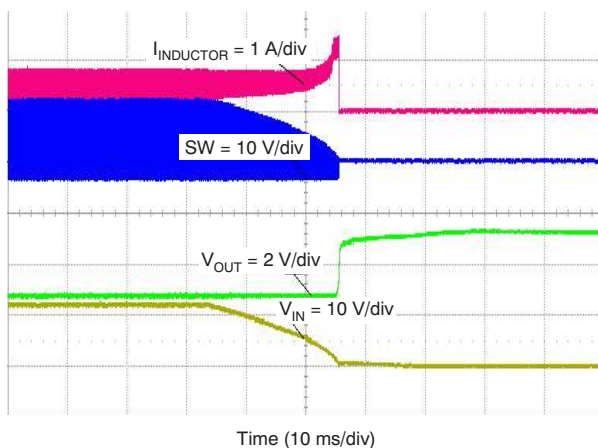**Figure 19. Startup on V$_{IN}$ at 160-mA Load**
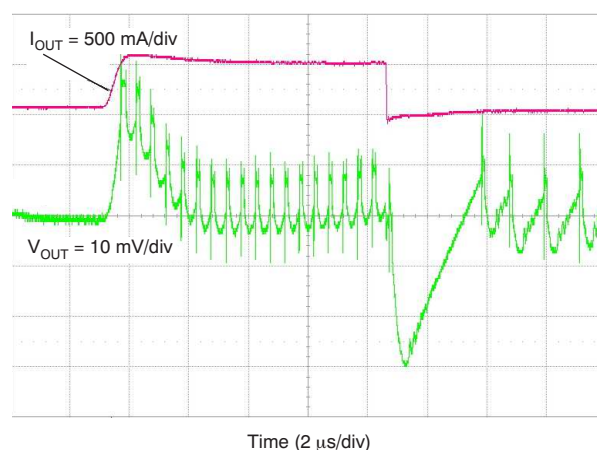

Figure 20. Shutdown on V$_{IN}$ at 500-mA Load

Figure 21. Load Transient Response, 0 mA to 500 mA with V$_{IN}$ = 12V

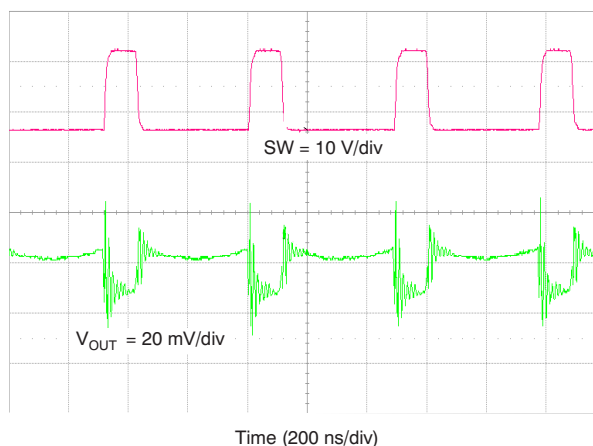**Figure 22. Output Voltage Ripple, V$_{IN}$ = 12 V and I$_{OUT}$ = 500 mA**

5 Conclusion

The TPS6215x buck dc-to-dc converter can be configured as an inverting buck-boost converter to generate a negative output voltage. The inverting buck-boost topology changes some system characteristics, such as input voltage range and maximum output current. This application report explains the inverting buck-boost topology and how to select the proper values of external components with the changed system characteristics. Measured data from the example design are provided. This application report also applies to any of the devices in the TPS6213x/4x/5x/6x/7x families.

6 References

The following documents are available for download from the TI web site:

1. Daniels, David G. (2009). *Creating an inverting power supply from a step-down regulator*. Application report SLVA317A.
2. TPS62130 product data sheet. Literature number SLVSAG7.
3. TPS62140 product data sheet. Literature number SLVSAJ0.
4. TPS62150 product data sheet. Literature number SLVSAL5.
5. TPS62160 product data sheet. Literature number SLVSAM2.
6. TPS62170 product data sheet. Literature number SLVSAT8.
7. Tucker, J. (2007). *Using a buck converter in an inverting buck-boost topology*. Technical brief SLYT286.
8. Tucker, J. (2007). *Using the TPS5430 as an inverting buck-boost converter*. Application report SLVA257A.
9. DCS-Control™ Landing Page: www.ti.com/dcs-control

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Texas Instruments Incorporated and its subsidiaries (TI) reserve the right to make corrections, enhancements, improvements and other changes to its semiconductor products and services per JESD46, latest issue, and to discontinue any product or service per JESD48, latest issue. Buyers should obtain the latest relevant information before placing orders and should verify that such information is current and complete. All semiconductor products (also referred to herein as "components") are sold subject to TI's terms and conditions of sale supplied at the time of order acknowledgment.

TI warrants performance of its components to the specifications applicable at the time of sale, in accordance with the warranty in TI's terms and conditions of sale of semiconductor products. Testing and other quality control techniques are used to the extent TI deems necessary to support this warranty. Except where mandated by applicable law, testing of all parameters of each component is not necessarily performed.

TI assumes no liability for applications assistance or the design of Buyers' products. Buyers are responsible for their products and applications using TI components. To minimize the risks associated with Buyers' products and applications, Buyers should provide adequate design and operating safeguards.

TI does not warrant or represent that any license, either express or implied, is granted under any patent right, copyright, mask work right, or other intellectual property right relating to any combination, machine, or process in which TI components or services are used. Information published by TI regarding third-party products or services does not constitute a license to use such products or services or a warranty or endorsement thereof. Use of such information may require a license from a third party under the patents or other intellectual property of the third party, or a license from TI under the patents or other intellectual property of TI.

Reproduction of significant portions of TI information in TI data books or data sheets is permissible only if reproduction is without alteration and is accompanied by all associated warranties, conditions, limitations, and notices. TI is not responsible or liable for such altered documentation. Information of third parties may be subject to additional restrictions.

Resale of TI components or services with statements different from or beyond the parameters stated by TI for that component or service voids all express and any implied warranties for the associated TI component or service and is an unfair and deceptive business practice. TI is not responsible or liable for any such statements.

Buyer acknowledges and agrees that it is solely responsible for compliance with all legal, regulatory and safety-related requirements concerning its products, and any use of TI components in its applications, notwithstanding any applications-related information or support that may be provided by TI. Buyer represents and agrees that it has all the necessary expertise to create and implement safeguards which anticipate dangerous consequences of failures, monitor failures and their consequences, lessen the likelihood of failures that might cause harm and take appropriate remedial actions. Buyer will fully indemnify TI and its representatives against any damages arising out of the use of any TI components in safety-critical applications.

In some cases, TI components may be promoted specifically to facilitate safety-related applications. With such components, TI's goal is to help enable customers to design and create their own end-product solutions that meet applicable functional safety standards and requirements. Nonetheless, such components are subject to these terms.

No TI components are authorized for use in FDA Class III (or similar life-critical medical equipment) unless authorized officers of the parties have executed a special agreement specifically governing such use.

Only those TI components which TI has specifically designated as military grade or "enhanced plastic" are designed and intended for use in military/aerospace applications or environments. Buyer acknowledges and agrees that any military or aerospace use of TI components which have *not* been so designated is solely at the Buyer's risk, and that Buyer is solely responsible for compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements in connection with such use.

TI has specifically designated certain components as meeting ISO/TS16949 requirements, mainly for automotive use. In any case of use of non-designated products, TI will not be responsible for any failure to meet ISO/TS16949.

Products		**Applications**	
Audio	www.ti.com/audio	Automotive and Transportation	www.ti.com/automotive
Amplifiers	amplifier.ti.com	Communications and Telecom	www.ti.com/communications
Data Converters	dataconverter.ti.com	Computers and Peripherals	www.ti.com/computers
DLP® Products	www.dlp.com	Consumer Electronics	www.ti.com/consumer-apps
DSP	dsp.ti.com	Energy and Lighting	www.ti.com/energy
Clocks and Timers	www.ti.com/clocks	Industrial	www.ti.com/industrial
Interface	interface.ti.com	Medical	www.ti.com/medical
Logic	logic.ti.com	Security	www.ti.com/security
Power Mgmt	power.ti.com	Space, Avionics and Defense	www.ti.com/space-avionics-defense
Microcontrollers	microcontroller.ti.com	Video and Imaging	www.ti.com/video
RFID	www.ti-rfid.com		
OMAP Applications Processors	www.ti.com/omap	**TI E2E Community**	e2e.ti.com
Wireless Connectivity	www.ti.com/wirelessconnectivity		

Mailing Address: Texas Instruments, Post Office Box 655303, Dallas, Texas 75265
Copyright © 2013, Texas Instruments Incorporated